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Homers are nice, but a rubberized surface would be better

By [Ian Shapira](#)

Mentally and physically-disabled children and adults who play tee-ball in the [Miracle League of Alexandria](#) enjoy all kinds of morale-boosting rules. Everyone person who takes a swing — no matter where the ball lands — hits a homer and gets to round the bases. Players from T.C. Williams' baseball team help Miracle Leaguers catch balls and run the bases to make sure no one gets hurt. Each game is two innings. No score is kept. And no team wins.

The only wrinkle: The Miracle League players in Alexandria are using a regular dirt field instead of a synthetic diamond. The rubberized version would be smoother and reduce the chances for accidents

"Two weeks ago, we couldn't play because there was rain and it was too soft for the players' wheelchairs, and they would get stuck," said Bill Rivers, a retired manager for the General Services Administration, who serves as the chairman of the Miracle League of Alexandria. "The ultimate goal is to have a special field."

This Saturday, the Miracle League will convene at the Lee Center on Jefferson Street for its second-to-last game of the fall season, when they expect to announce a \$20,000 donation for the new field from a local Toyota dealership and the auto manufacturer's headquarters, Rivers said. ([Saturday's weather looks to be sunny, according to the Post's Capital Weather Gang.](#)) The new field will cost about \$420,000, Rivers said, with the city of Alexandria chipping in about \$285,000. The rest will come from donations.

Miracle Leagues have sprouted up across the nation and the Washington area, including others in Prince William County and Manassas Park, Rivers said. (Each Miracle League program pays an annual registration fee to the national [Georgia-based nonprofit Miracle League](#) for use of the brand and the logo and guidance, Rivers said.) The programs are overseen partly by a combination of local governments or community volunteers. The Alexandria league launched in the spring and now has about 30 players, ranging in ages from 12 to their 50s, Rivers said.

Some of the anecdotes that the games produce are lasting. At one recent game, he said, one wheelchair-bound player approached the plate, and, after taking his turn at-bat, was lifted out of his wheelchair by his parents.

"It was the first time he'd been physically able to do that in sports. One parent took each of his arms, and walked him first base, and then took a wheelchair so he could continue the bases," said Rivers, who wasn't there but heard about the scene later. "I was told there wasn't a dry eye in the house. And it was his birthday."

By [Ian Shapira](#) | 12:09 PM ET, 10/13/2011